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## 10. ASHY MINIVET *PERICROCOTUS DIVARICATUS* (RAFFLES) IN KANHA NATIONAL PARK, MANDLA DISTRICT, MADHYA PRADESH

We were watching a mixed hunting party of birds during a nature trail near Kisli Gate, in Kanha National Park (Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh), early in the morning, on March 19, 1998, when we saw a grey and white minivet, perched right at the top of a sal *Shorea robusta*. Through the binoculars, we saw a long-tailed, bulb sized bird, which had a prominent white forehead and a very small supercilium. It was otherwise grey on top and on the wings, and white below, immediately recognized as a female minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus* — the white forehead being the characteristic feature of this bird and a total lack of any red, orange or pink in its plumage, being the other. We got a very good view as the bird was perched in full sunlight and 'co-operated' for at least three to five minutes before it flew off, when we saw some white in its wings. This is the first record of an ashy minivet for Kanha and also the first for Madhya Pradesh.

The only other reports of ashy minivet have been from the Andaman Islands (Butler 1899),

Karnala, Maharashtra [31.i.1965 (Navarro 1965)]; Madras, Tamil Nadu [9.xii.1984 (Santharam 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990)]; Thekkady in Periyar Sanctuary, Kerala [17.xii.1989 (Robertson 1992)]; Himachal Pradesh [22.iii.1993 (Khacher 1994)]. Ours is, therefore, only the sixth record of the bird from India. In Madras, however, it is being seen regularly by Dr. Santharam in December and January in the Guindy National Park and Theosophical Society Estate.

April 3, 1998

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## 11. REDVENTED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS CAFER* FEEDING ON TAIL OF HOUSE GECKO *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS*

On July 26, 1990, while on duty in the World Forestry Arboretum, Jaipur, Rajasthan, at about 0900 hrs I observed a redvented bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) repeatedly attacking a house gecko *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* on an external wall of my office building. To escape from danger, the gecko moved fast on the wall and tried to seek a safer place. After a few seconds, the gecko broke off its tail to divert the attention of the bulbul. The wriggling tail drew the attention of the bulbul immediately and soon the bird started feeding on it. Within five minutes, the bulbul completely devoured the tail and flew away.

According to Ali and Ripley (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, 1983) the redvented bulbul mainly feeds on fruits, berries, flower nectar, and insects. There is one report of parent bulbuls feeding their nestling on young *Calotes versicolor* (Richards, *JBNHS* 25:503). Feeding on the tail of a house gecko by an adult bulbul is quite unusual.

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## 12. COMMENTS ON THE BIRD LIST OF THATTAKAD BIRD SANCTUARY, KERALA

In his paper on the Birds of Thattakad Bird Sanctuary (*JBNHS* 93(3): 487-506), R. Sugathan has included two species of birds which are unlikely to be seen in Thattakad.

The rufousbellied plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulinus*) — No. 87 — has been recorded only in northeastern India with a few records west from Bhutan and West Bengal (SYNOPSIS, Ripley 1982). Earlier, the Indian plaintive cuckoo was considered only a subspecies (*passerinus*) of *Cacomantis merulinus* and in his BIRDS OF KERALA (1969), Sálím Ali has referred to the Indian plaintive cuckoo by its old nomenclature. However, in 1951, Biswas (*Ibis* 93: 596-598) has shown that these two were indeed distinct species. These were then renamed Indian plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*) and rufousbellied plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulinus*) and have since been accepted by Sálím Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. I wonder if the inclusion of the rufousbellied plaintive cuckoo in the

Thattakad list was through an oversight.

The green munia (*Estrilda formosa*) — No. 264 — is restricted in its distribution to central India (SYNOPSIS, Ripley 1982). It has been included in A BOOK OF KERALA BIRDS Neelakantan (1993), with a question mark, based on a sight record from Wynaad. Its presence in Kerala is very unlikely, unless these were escaped cage birds.

The list also includes some birds for which additional notes on identification, sighting dates could have been given. For example, the two grasshopper warblers (*Locustella* spp.) — Nos. 218 & 219 — are said to be very difficult to locate and identify in the field. Have these species been mist-netted to clinch the identification? I also feel that the two species — jungle wren-warbler (*Prinia sylvatica*) and white throated munia (*Lonchura malabarica*) — Nos. 216 & 264 — are rather unusual records as these are birds of drier habitats (See habitat description in BIRDS OF KERALA).